

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman

**Remarks at the Commencement Ceremony of Vincennes University
May 2nd, 2009**

Thank you. I'm honored to be here today and humbled by the degree the University has given me. I don't take lightly the approval and esteem of one of our state's academic treasures. Vincennes University is a great economic engine for the state and an important partner in progress. Thank you so very much.

Dr. Helton, the Board, faculty and staff here at Vincennes University have a lot to be proud of. As I've visited the campus over the years, I've noticed it change as you've worked to beautify the grounds. I've always considered Vincennes to be a perfect place for a Hoosier university. The area is steeped in history, one of the most storied parts of our state. And some of the most promising and dedicated Hoosiers have chosen to come here to learn.

The people who graduate from Vincennes University have a healthy dose of the Hoosier spirit in them. I've had the privilege to meet and work with many of them, and they always stand out to me as practical, sensible people. You know what you need to succeed, and you pursue it with tenacity – and an eye for a good deal.

Vincennes University stands out as one of our state's most affordable and also one of our state's most respected schools. You know you're getting a good value for your education dollar. I have yet to meet a VU grad with buyer's remorse. Even folks who have gone on to transfer their credits and continue to study somewhere else know and appreciate the high standards at Vincennes.

VU graduates are also notoriously hard-working. This ceremony is the celebration of a job well done. You've come through your programs successfully and you've been deemed ready to take on the challenges of full-time careers, advanced degrees and more. That's nothing to be taken lightly. We need people like you in every community in our state – people who are willing to sweat a little, stay up late once or twice and do what it takes to move forward.

Another thing I've noticed about VU graduates is that you're forward thinkers. You've had your eyes on the future all along. That's what brought you to Vincennes University. You came here to get ahead and to carve out the kind of life you want for yourself and your family. I'm proud of you. Your work here doesn't just make your personal future brighter, it makes our state's future brighter.

I understand there is a level of uncertainty in graduating in the year 2009. We're living through some very tough times. Indiana is not immune to the problems our nation is facing and I know there is hardly a person in this auditorium who has not been impacted by the state of the economy.

If you are worried about the future, where you will find work, how you'll afford to realize your dreams, I want to remind you that you are ultimately the one who will determine the course your life will take.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with the art of sailing. But there are very good lessons to be learned on the deck of a sailing ship. When the wind blows in what appears to be the wrong direction, knowledgeable sailors can set their sails in a way that will keep their ships moving forward and on the right course.

As one poet put it "... 'tis the set of the sails, not the gales, that decides the way to go." The economic winds are blowing hard in one direction right now. But I know you can find a way to use that to your advantage. I am certain with a little hard work and determination, you can set your sails in a way that will keep you moving forward.

Times of adversity reveal who we are; they do not determine who we are. It's your turn to show the world that you are made of sterner stuff than the average Joe, that you cannot be discouraged by adversity.

We need only consult the history books for inspiration. One famous Hoosier was the son of an illiterate farmer. He served a tour in an unglamorous war. He went on to lose an election for the state legislature. Next, he started a business venture that failed and got him up to his ears in debt. He tried to run for the US Congress and failed. He tried for the vice-presidency – and failed. He ran for U.S. Senate and failed.

But Abraham Lincoln was one of the finest Presidents the United States has ever known. He persevered in the face of difficulty. He aimed higher and fought harder. He gained from his failure and kept his sights set on the future when a lesser man would have despaired.

I'm here to tell you that a life of achievement is the product of knowledge and hard work. I have every confidence that the tools you have earned here at Vincennes University will help you build a

life of achievement – in business, in education or in any work you chose.

With your help, Indiana will continue to move forward. Because, we will fill our sails with tenacity, discipline and perseverance. I am committed to Indiana's economic recovery and to the discipline of fiscal responsibility. And I intend to persevere in those areas as long as I am called on to serve. I have that responsibility to you. But, we all have a responsibility to Indiana, which is to simply to do our best. Success has been defined as doing all you can with all you have.

Don't underestimate what you're capable of, or what might lie ahead. I hope you'll grasp opportunity with both hands and remember that as a member of this graduating class, you have chosen to set your sails against the gales. You will determine your own direction.

Again, thanks are in order, to Dr. Helton and all at Vincennes University for the honor you've given me.

And the last word I have for you is obvious – congratulations! My hearty congratulations to every graduate. Job well done!